

THE LOST AND US - 4
DOES THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN MANTECA
Know Where IT IS Are Going?

Philippians 3:13-14

INTRODUCTION:

- I. **ILLUS:** Two ships are in at dock at San Francisco piers and both are expected to arrive in Hawaii.
- A. In one ship a captain, with confidence, can tell you his destination in just a few words, even though he has never sailed to Hawaii before!
 - B. In the other ship, the captain has been to Hawaii many times, but really gives his crew no aim and no specific instructions as they set sail from S.F. out into the Pacific, figuring that Hawaii's out there, & that's where he's supposed to go, so he'll ultimately end up there.
 1. Which ship do you suppose will reach the desired port in a timely and orderly fashion? Which captain will be successful? Which ship would YOU want to be on?
 2. And, more to the point for our specific line of study, **which ship and captain does the planning and efforts and accomplishments of this congregation most resemble?**
- II. Everyone of us wants to do those things that will guarantee success in whatever venture we pursue!
- A. Yet, so often we try to be successful **without a plan.**
 1. Those who are well-schooled know you couldn't have had success toward a degree without planning your actions, plotting your course, and persevering in fulfillment.
 2. **WHAT IS IT** that makes us think we can *be successful for the Lord* in carrying the gospel to the lost without the same stipulations of planning and fulfillment?
 - B. Can we definitively state (1) **what we have done**, (2) **what we're now doing**, and (3) **what we're planning to do** to help people go to heaven? **DO WE REALLY HAVE ANY SPECIFIC PLANS?**
- III. God wants every Christian to succeed in His kingdom, and this means spreading it's borders by reaching out to help the lost be saved!
- A. And, he has given this congregation the formula for that success in passages like our text: **Philippians 3:13, 14- "BRETHREN, I DO NOT REGARD MYSELF AS HAVING LAID HOLD OF IT YET; BUT ONE THING I DO: FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND AND REACHING FORWARD TO WHAT LIES AHEAD, I PRESS ON TOWARD THE GOAL FOR THE PRIZE OF THE UPWARD CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS."**
 - B. That "*goal for the prize of the upward calling of God*" is **where** PAUL was going, and he knew **how** he was going to get there.
 1. From where you've been, and considering where this church is right now, do you really have any plans for where you're going to be a year from now? Five years?
 2. And JUST AS IMPORTANTLY, do you know how you're going to get there?

I. FOR US TO GET TO WHERE THE LORD WANTS US TO BE, WE MUST DEVELOP AN ATTITUDE LIKE PAUL HAD: "I DON'T REGARD MYSELF AS HAVING LAID HOLD OF IT YET..."

- A. We can't smack our spiritual lips and belch real loud like we're full and there's nothing else for us!
 1. There are many lost souls right here in Manteca who are still waiting for the gospel! **Mark 16:15; John 4:35-** "*Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.*"
 - a) If we think we "**HAVE ALREADY ARRIVED,**" so far as reaching the lost, then **WE WON'T BE going, nor teaching, nor working** with LOVE nor AMBITION for their salvation!
 - b) Both Jesus and Jeremiah sat down and cried because their people were lost; Paul endured many traumas in trying to reach out to the lost house of Israel; how many in this community have touched **YOUR** loving heart because they are lost and need your help?

2. A congregation must never become self-satisfied; neither with their own self-righteousness **NOR** with their efforts to carry the gospel to others. **Rev 3:14-17-** *“And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 15 ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. 16 ‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 17 ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,”*
 3. Paul realized that he had not attained his ultimate goal, and so long as life was in his mortal body he continued to **GLORIFY GOD** in all his efforts!
- B. As long as we realize we’re not finished yet, we can be stimulated to greater heights of evangelistic zeal and ambition!
1. We must continue to have a desire to grow: spiritually, numerically, and in the service of God. **1 Pet 2:1-2; Mat 5:6.**
 2. And this *stimulation of our desires to serve the Lord* are so fundamental:
 - a) The “great commission” is God’s **CALL FROM ABOVE** to arouse us to action! **Matt.28:19; Mk.16:15:** *“Go ye... = ...GO ME!”*
 - b) Jesus teaching about the rich man & Lazarus is His **CALL FROM BENEATH** regarding the urgency of the situation. **Lk.16:19-31.**
 - c) All of our neighbors desiring to know about salvation is our **PLEA FROM WITHOUT** in passages like **Acts 2:37 & 16:30-** *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*
 - d) And that **PLEA FROM WITHIN** will move us because we have NOT completely lost our compassion and love as long as we can feel with Jesus in places like **Matt.23:37-** *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, (Manteca, Manteca) who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.” Or if our yearning within is like the Psalmist’s in **Psa.51:10-** *“Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.”**

II. BUT ALSO TO GET WHERE THE LORD WANTS US TO BE WE MUST SET (PAUL-LIKE) WORTHWHILE GOALS- "BUT THIS ONE THING I DO"....

- A. By setting goals we are activating our COMMITMENT! By **WRITING DOWN** our goals we’re giving ourselves a much better chance of being successful! [About **3% write down goals specifically**; about **10%** have their goals *in their minds*. the **3%** does from **40% to 100% MORE** than the **10%**!] *If we really believed this, what do you suppose we’d be doing in our service to God?*
1. Strange, or new, activities are not easy to engage in consistently!
 2. The more your commitment to Jesus Christ is manifested the easier it becomes ... you begin “telegraphing” your intentions and others HELP YOU.
- B. **We need short-range goals.** When goal-oriented activities become habitual the first hurdle has been surpassed!
1. Just like attending services on Sunday and Wednesday nights, we realize we’re obligated at these times because of long established practice! [Don’t have to STOP each week and consider whether or not we’re going to attend!]
 2. Persistency will bring **SUCCESS**, and **that** is what cements us into any program!
- C. **We also need long range goals.**
1. Much time, thought, and prayer need to go into setting objectives for this congregation.
 - a) **ILLUS:** A preacher was asked to come and work with a congregation.
 - 1) In order to evaluate the situation he asked, “What are your long range goals?”
 - 2) “Just try to piddle around long enough until we get the building paid off.”
 - b) **YOU WILL NEVER DO MORE WORK FOR THE LORD THAN YOU INTEND TO DO, and it be acceptable in His sight!**
 2. Jesus did not **DIE** for congregations to **“piddle around.”** **Heb 11:13-16-** *“All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance,*

and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. 15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.”

3. We need to remember that maturity is a gradual process. **Phil 3:12-** “Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”
- D. How do we find/ MAKE time for doing evangelistic work? [We ALL have the same amount of time: **86,400 seconds per day!**]
 1. It’s back to the basics of PRIORITIZING!
 - a) What if your child got a broken leg?
 - b) It’s unplanned! Unscheduled! Would you SEND him to the hospital or TAKE him?
 2. **Only thing most of us have to stop doing in order to do MORE personal evangelism is “WASTING TIME”!**
 3. Seminars on “*TIME MANAGEMENT*” teach us that every minute we spend in **PLANNING** will save **twice that amount of time in execution!** Why don’t we try using efficient, proven methods for doing the most important work on earth?

III. FORGET THE PAST- "FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND." vs. 13

- A. We can't afford to wallow in **PAST FAILURES**, for that will sap us of any strength we might have used for the Lord!
 1. If we **struggle awkwardly** in our past mistakes, we can become discouraged, **like Elijah**, and want to give up. **1 Kings 19:14-** “Then he said, “I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, torn down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets with the sword. **And I alone am left;** and they seek my life, to take it away.”
 2. **A New Day** by Ralph Waldo Emerson

*Finish every day and be done with it.
You have done what you could.
Some blunders and absurdities no doubt creep in;
Forget them as soon as possible.
Tomorrow is a new day; begin it well and serenely.
It is too dear, with its hopes and invitations,
To waste a moment on the yesterdays."*
 3. Past failure should never be an excuse for not pressing on to greater things.
 - a) Christians do make mistakes, but they must always “gather the loose ends” and continue on.
 - b) **ILLUS:** In a gathering at a christian’s home some of the church members were talking about working for the Lord, attending services, & studying the Bible when each got to mentioning his favorite verse. One man gave, “**AND IT CAME TO PASS..**”. When the others looked at him questioningly, he explained: “In all my trials it’s been a real help to me to remember the statement: ‘and it came to pass.’ How GLAD I am that the Bible doesn’t say, ‘**AND IT CAME TO STAY!**’”
- B. We should not fall into the rut of trying to **live/dwell in/on** our **PAST SUCCESSES**.
 1. Paul had a right, if anyone, to do this! **Philippians 3:4-7-** “although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. 7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”

2. The experience and satisfaction of past accomplishments should only be the basis FOR and greater incentives TO service TODAY!
3. The past must not hold us back, but send us forth.
 - a) **ILLUS:** Charles M. Schwab was over one of Andrew Carnegie's steel mills, and sent the following message to Mr. Carnegie: "WE BROKE ALL RECORDS YESTERDAY."
 - 1) Mr. Carnegie wired back: "WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TODAY!"
 - 2) One of the greatest mistakes and wastes of energy and opportunity that men do --- **is trying to rest on the laurels of yesterday's accomplishments!**
 - b) YESTERDAY must be used as a GUIDE POST, **but never as a hitching post.**
- C. What should our attitude be? **Heb 12:1-** "*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*"

IV. FINALLY, WE MUST KEEP OUR PRIORITIES STRAIGHT- "I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK OF THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS."

- A. Our first priority should be our service to our Lord Jesus Christ. **Matt.6:33**
- B. Like the good soldier, we must never lose sight of what our true purpose is. **2 Tim 2:3-4-** "*Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.*"
- C. We can look to the future with confidence **Phil.4:13** -"*I can do;*" **Rom.8:31-** "*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?*" **Rom.8:37-39-** "*But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"
- D. In order to reach our goal we must ever press forward- "**pressing forward to those things which are before.**"
 1. We need to fight the daily battles. **Rom.16:20-** "*And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*"
 2. And we can certainly be encouraged with this assurance: **THE WAR WILL BE WON! Rev.22:1-5-** "*And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; 4 and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.*"

CONCLUSION:

- I.** We CAN know where we're going if we're truly AIMED FOR SUCCESS in God's kingdom!
- II.** And we can GET TO WHERE WE'RE AIMING if we put God's "pattern for success" into action!
- III.** We know that the kingdom can grow, from what happened on that day of Pentecost and in subsequent years. **Matt.13:31-32-** "*He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; 32 and this is smaller than all other seeds; but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants, and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES."*"